

We woke up early to catch our flight to Madrid, but the excitement had taken over us, so there was no way we could miss the view from the airplane's window, no matter how sleepy we were.



After we landed after approximately four hours, there was another four-hour-bus-trip to Cordoba, that awaited us. The first thing I noticed were the olive trees, which were the main thing people grew in their infields.

Cordoba earns its income from tourism, mining silver and producing olive oil.



When we arrived at the bus station in Cordoba, the host families were already there to pick us up and drive us to their houses in the small, but very peaceful and beautiful village - Villaviciosa de Cordoba, which was 45 minutes away with a car.



Even though we were staying in a very small village, you can definitely see the difference in the style of the houses, the different atmosphere that the very cheerful and hospitable people bring. Together with the gorgeous views of every sunrise and every sunset, the ordinary stone paths and the big white houses, glued to one another, Villaviciosa de Cordoba felt like a dreamland, a small heaven.

The first day, when I stepped into my Spanish home, I was welcomed extremely warm by Adrian's entire family, which had gathered especially for my arriving.

Every morning, Adrian's grandmother - Ana, would make us breakfast before we go out to meet the rest of the students on the project and their teachers, to begin the program for the day. She even prepared me food for the day, so I didn't have to spend any money. Ana was very nice to me, she even gave me presents for my family here in Bulgaria.

For dinner, she would prepare something traditional like paella, tortilla or gazpacho.



I noticed, that the dinners in a Spanish home would come to an end very quickly. When I asked Adrian about it, he confirmed that at dinner, once they finished eating, they get up, which for a Bulgarian would be impossible, because we like to chat while we are eating and so the dinner can continue for about 2-3 hours.

On the second day, we had a tour around the village. They showed us the olive oil factory - how they extract the olive oil and how they process Extra virgin. The teachers also took us to the vineyard and explained to us how they make the wine with traditional appliances.



Of course, they took us to their school and I loved everything about it. Even though it was a small school and didn't look like much on the outside, on the inside however, it had everything - the hallways were colorful with interesting decorations made out of paper or plastic.

Except for the classrooms, there was a workshop with all kinds of instruments, where students learn how to make or repair things, and music cabinet in which we created a song for the project.



The sights we visited in Cordoba were **The Mosque** - A UNESCO-listed World Heritage Site, La Mezquita is the Great Mosque that was created for the Caliphate of Córdoba, an important Moorish kingdom of Andalusia. Built in the eighth century, the Mezquita is a masterpiece of Islamic architecture and is considered one of the most striking monuments of Moorish Spain;



The Judería - The old Jewish quarter is one of the most delightful areas of Córdoba to explore. With its narrow lanes, whitewashed houses, flower-filled patios, and quiet little squares, this area has a very distinctive atmosphere. Besides the enchanting Andalusian ambience, highlights of this historic neighborhood include two important Jewish monuments: the 15th-century Mudéjar-style synagogue at the center of the quarter and the Casa de Sefarad (House of Spanish Jews) museum; both sights are on the Calle Judíos;



The Palacio de los Marqueses de Viana is an aristocratic palace renowned for its 12 patios designed in the Andalusian style with decorative fountains and lush landscaping. The palace also has a collection of antique furniture, leatherwork, and an exhibition on falconry;



Acázar de los Reyes Cristianos (Castle of the Christian Monarchs)- Alcázar is across from the Puente Romano bridge on a site that includes Roman and Visigoth ruins. This former Caliphal Palace was home to the Moorish rulers until the city was conquered by Catholic King Fernando III in 1236.



Puente Romano (Roman Bridge) - A vestige of the ancient Roman era, the Puente Romano is a 16-arched bridge that spans the Río Guadalquivir.



The teachers from Spain had organised a trip to Sevilla as well. The places we visited there were: **Catedral de Sevilla** - Seville Cathedral is the largest Gothic cathedral in Christendom, unmatched in its impressive scale and abundance of art treasures. Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, this incomparable monument was constructed between 1402 and 1506 on the site of the town's principal mosque.



Barrio Santa Cruz - Seville's Most Charming Neighborhood - Brimming with old-fashioned Sevillian charm, the Barrio de Santa Cruz was the Judería (Jewish quarter) during the medieval era under Moorish rule. Many of the quarter's churches were originally synagogues.



Real Alcázar - Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Real Alcázar was originally the medieval fortress of Moorish rulers and later of the Christian kings. The palace was built in the 10th century for Moorish rulers.



On our last day of the project, we said our goodbyes to the families and our group went to Madrid to spend the afternoon getting to know the city. We had spent the night in a hotel there and early in the morning, packed our bags and got ready to come back home.

We had an amazing time on this project - we learnt about the history of Spain, thanks to the prepared guides, we tasted traditional Spanish dishes, got to know their traditions and habits and of course the Bulgaria team won the photo contest held in the village at the end of the project. We were also praised by all teachers about our fluency in English.

Spain was an unforgettable experience for us and we will always come back to Villaviciosa de Cordoba in our hearts.



By Valeria